

The NCJFCJ, NCJJ, PPCD, and the CHILD VICTIMS ACT MODEL COURTS PROJECT

Founded in 1937, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) is the oldest judicial membership organization in the United States. The NCJFCJ's primary purpose is the education and training of state and local judges of juvenile and family jurisdiction and the employees of such courts. There are more than 1,800 dues-paying members, including judges, juvenile law enforcement officers, attorneys, child protective services, and probation personnel. In 1969, the NCJFCJ moved its headquarters to the University of Nevada campus in Reno, Nevada, and established its National College of Juvenile and Family Law.

The NCJFCJ understands that the best interests of children are best served by highly skilled judges and other professionals, and continues extensive efforts to improve juvenile and family courts through highly developed, practical, and applicable training. With training as its focus, the NCJFCJ also conducts many other significant projects to improve the juvenile justice and family law system, including a Department of Continuing Judicial Education; a Permanency Planning for Children Department; a Family Violence Department; an annual, interdisciplinary National Conference on Juvenile Justice in cooperation with the National District Attorneys Association; and cooperative projects with the National Center on Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), the research division of the NCJFCJ, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) is located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Founded in 1973, the NCJJ is a private research organization dedicated to preventing juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and neglect through research and technical assistance. The NCJJ serves as a national repository of more than 10 million computerized juvenile justice records, providing the comprehensive research analyses on trends in the field. The organization produces data, publications, and provides extensive technical assistance to a wide spectrum of public and private agencies working with troubled youth.

Since 1972, the Permanency Planning for Children Department (PPCD) of the NCJFCJ has been dedicated to improving court and systems handling of child abuse and neglect cases for the nation's children in out-of-home care. The PPCD plays an essential role in helping judges make sure each child's case is expeditiously handled and that safety, permanency, and well-being are paramount. Nationwide training and technical assistance, as well as numerous timely publications – including the widely hailed benchbooks *RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases* and *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* – emphasize children's unique sense of time and serve as best practice guidelines in helping courts and child welfare professionals adopt new procedures to better respond to children and families in trouble.

Over the last ten years, the PPCD has established the Child Victims Act Model Courts Project which has grown to become a nationwide network of 23 "Model Courts" pioneering systems changes and court engagement in innovative collaborations in their jurisdictions. Ranging from the country's largest urban centers, e.g., New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, to 19 smaller cities, and including a tribal court in Zuni, New Mexico, the Model Courts represent a vital tool in court and systems change. The Model Courts have jurisdiction over a significant number of the nation's 556,000¹ children in out-of-home care, and have opened themselves to serve as laboratories for developing, evaluating, and implementing court and systems change. Through hard work and committed lead judges, the Model Courts have succeeded in achieving numerous court improvements for achieving timely permanency for thousands of children.

¹ Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Interim Estimate for September 30, 2002. November 2002.